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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [KDEM](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [PHUM](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: ARTICLE 140: NINEWA FACES SERIOUS DOWNSIDE RISKS  
FROM ENCROACHING "GREEN LINE"

REF: A. 06 BAGHDAD 04017  
[B](#). BAGHDAD 00559  
[C](#). BAGHDAD 001849  
[D](#). BAGHDAD 02154

Classified By: Ninewa PRT Team Leader Jason Hyland: 1.4 (B) and (D)

This is a Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) message.

#### Summary

[1](#). (S/NF) Ninewa borders the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) and has a substantial Kurdish population. Because of a Sunni Arab boycott of provincial elections in 2005, the Kurdish Alliance (KDP/PUK combined list) has complete control over provincial government with a three quarters majority in the Provincial Council (PC). Though Ninewa Governor Kashmoula is a Sunni Arab, he was elected on the Kurdish list. The senior PC leadership is Kurdish and Vice-Governor Kashro Goran is the Ninewa KDP chairman. Peshmerga are deployed throughout the northern and eastern parts of the province and the two Iraqi Army Divisions (2nd and 3rd IAD) are majority Kurd. The areas with Kurdish Security Forces (KSF ) both Peshmerga and Assiyash, Kurdish secret police) enjoy a relatively permissive environment. KSF are highly capable and closely partnered with Coalition Forces in neutralizing terrorist threats, both operationally and through intelligence cooperation. The KRG is an easily accessible getaway place for provincial officials.

[2](#). (S/NF) On the other hand, Sunni Arabs, who constitute the clear majority in the province (Note: though exact numbers are impossible, the PRT bases its broad estimate on the PDS food distribution system and the results of the 2006 elections. End Note), are counting on a transparent and fair Article 140 process to protect what they view as their territory. Through this majority they strongly expect to assume political control in the next provincial elections. Moderate representatives of the Sunni Arab majority have stressed the importance of a transparent Article 140 process that will address their core needs. However, the KDP has filled the legal void in the Article 140 process left by the central government. Their aggressive efforts, along with the Sunni Arab sense of territorial patrimony, have left an opening for terrorists to inject their rejectionist religious radicalism with an element of anti-Kurd nationalism. The many minority communities of Ninewa are caught in the middle. Article 140 is the subtext to nearly ever political question in Ninewa and mismanagement of this process courts serious political and security risks, including increased violence.

#### Benefits of Kurdish Influence

[3](#). (SBU) The Kurdish Alliance (KDP/PUK - in Ninewa primarily the former) effectively represents its constituency (perhaps

15-20 percent of Ninewa's population). The provincial government's administration incorporates educated bureaucrats from across Ninewa's diverse population and, when enabled by the central government, is an effective executive. The PC has developed institutionally with its current composition, with an active committee structure and high attendance (reftel).

¶4. (S/NF) The most effective Iraqi security forces in Ninewa are primarily Kurdish, whether integrated into the Iraqi Army, or operating in de facto fashion. The operational and intelligence cooperation they provide to the Coalition is invaluable. As well, almost all senior provincial leadership keeps their families in the KRG, inoculating them from certain threats from AQI/ISI. The Yezidi leadership lives under very heavy Kurdish security ) unlike the villages targeted in the August 14 attacks ) so much so that one needs to recheck on a map to confirm that they are inside Ninewa Province, and not neighboring Dahuk.

#### Challenges of Kurdish Presence

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¶5. (C/NF) The August 14 bombings in the Yezidi towns of Qahtaniya and al Jazeera in western Ninewa are only the latest in a series of attacks on Kurdish or Kurdish-affiliated targets in the province. The Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) is a primary target due to its aggressive efforts in implementing Article 140, particularly as it relates to those disputed territories the Kurds would like incorporated into the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

¶6. (S/NF) The friction caused by Kurdish expansion into

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Ninewa province has allowed Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) and other terrorist groups to interject their agenda with an element of Sunni Arab nationalism. The August 14 attacks took place on the front line of forward-deployed Peshmerga units that abut Sunni Arab tribal areas to the south. Sunni leaders in Ninewa have warned of a violent response to the Kurdish expansion of the KRG.

#### Arab Community Chafing

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¶7. (C) All signals indicate that the Kurdish moves to expand the KRG are viewed with suspicion and hostility by the Sunni Arab majority in Ninewa. Sunni Arabs freely admit their mistake in boycotting the 2005 elections and are eager for a second shot at power through the ballot box. Provincially, both man-on-the-street reporting and discussions with high-level Sunni Arab contacts indicate that resistance to the Kurds may become increasingly violent. The Mayor of Sunni Arab-dominated Ba'jj (located just south of the August 14 bombing sites), for example, told the PRT on February 7, "Qahtaniya will be part of 140; expect violence from Sunni Tribes." (ref D)

¶8. (C) Dr. Mohammad Shakir (Sunni Arab, Iraqi Islamic Party Ninewa Chairman, moderate) condemned the bombings in a meeting on August 16 and in a public statement issued by his party. He said the terrorists do such things for the money; the question is who pays them. Hypothesizing on who stands to gain from the Qahtaniya bombings, he hinted that the Kurds just might be behind it. (Note: We see no basis for this notion.) He also has told the PRT that Kurdish statements and actions in regards to Article 140 "help the terrorists."

#### Article 140 Implementation in Ninewa: Process vs. De Facto Annexation

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¶9. (C) Steadily, the so-called "Green Line" separating the

near-normalcy of the KRG from the rest of Iraq has already moved deep into Ninewa. Peshmerga exert a highly productive security influence over the districts of Tal Kaif, Hamdaniya, Shekhan, Sinjar, and Makhmur ) areas that trace an arc along the Dahuk border. The KDP politically controls the last three districts, with a heavy political influence throughout northern and eastern Ninewa. Mayors' offices typically fly the Kurdish flag and Dahuk provides significant support. During a July 24 meeting in Sinjar with IPAO Polacheck, the Mayor let slip that the governor of Dahuk was planning a significant number of projects in all three districts but he refused to discuss it further. Checkpoints throughout these areas also fly the Kurdish flag and are manned by uniformed Peshmerga. In meetings with local notables, the Assiyash commanders (Kurdish secret police) openly identify themselves as such to the PRT and CF.

¶10. (C) Ninewa Deputy Governor Goran repeatedly raises European historical analogies to the PRT, and talks expansively about the need to bring peace to Iraq by following the "Yugoslav example." In recent months, he said the constitution should be reformed to create three "ethnic regions" with Baghdad being "open to all, like Belgium." He said this idea was behind the Kurdish Alliance's efforts to bring the "disputed territories" into the KRG by "reforming" the constitution. Based on TAL 53, Article 143 in the Iraqi constitution defines the territory of the KRG and a "reformed" definition could simply include the "disputed territories." In any case, he said, "Kurdish security forces" were actively "securing" large parts of Ninewa. Sinjar KDP district chief Sarbast told the PRT recently that "if we were given a free hand, we could secure all of western Ninewa and then the people could vote their hearts to join the KRG." The bombed Yezidi villages of Qahtaniya and al Jazeera lay along a major fault line claimed by both Sinjar district and the Sunni-dominated district of Ba'jj.

¶11. (S) In Ninewa, Kurdish political parties have rushed to fill the vacuum left by slow progress on Article 140 implementation at the national level. The "disputed territories" in Ninewa stretch strategically along the eastern bank of the Tigris up across the northern border with Syria. The minorities who inhabit these areas face a difficult choice during the Article 140 process between the nationalism of the central government and the relative normalcy of the KRG. Due to security issues, the process appears to increasingly hinge on the question of community survival rather than a simple preference for which political entity they wish to belong.

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¶12. (C) The provincial Article 140 office is located in Sinjar, with district offices in Makhmur and Hamdaniya. According to officials in these offices, Deputy Governor Goran is the Ninewa Article 140 coordinator and they receive his "regular technical guidance." During a June 10 visit to the Sinjar office, former-TL Knight and IPAO Polacheck observed a well-functioning operation, with over a dozen employees busy taking forms from returnees (ref C). By the next visit on July 24, Sinjar-based director told IPAO Polacheck that in Sinjar district and Qahtaniya sub-district the first two phases (i.e., normalization and census) were complete. The director, who is Yezidi, explained the "census" mentioned in Article 140 would be the 1957 census which makes no reference to ethnicity. One needs to prove having lived in the disputed territories (or be a descendent) to qualify as a voter for the referendum. The director claimed that with continued cooperation with the central committee in Baghdad, he could not foresee any reason the process would not be completed this year.

Ninewa Is Full of Disputed Territories...  
Minorities Are Often Caught in the Middle  
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¶13. (S/NF) Ninewa province has several districts and sub-districts that are considered "disputed territories" under Article 140 that could be joined to the KRG in a future referendum. Some districts contain divisions between majority groups (Sunni Arab, Sunni Kurd), while some contain significant minority populations. These fault lines include:

-- Shikhan district in the northwest and Sinjar district in the east (predominately Yezidi with pockets of Sunni Arabs and Kurds);

-- Tal Kaif and al Hamdaniya districts east and adjacent to Mosul, aka the "Ninewa plain" (predominately Shabak, a primarily Shia, Kurdish-speaking cultural minority; and Christian with Kurdish influence politically but not demographically);

-- Mosul city (Sunni Arab, Kurd; most minorities have fled the city): Some KRG and KDP officials have publicly expressed their ambitions for the eastern half of the city;

-- Makhmur district in the southeast (predominately Kurd): the KRG administers this district although it is technically a part of Ninewa province;

-- Tal Afar city in the northwest (Overwhelmingly Turcoman Shia and Sunni);

-- Tal Afar subdistrict of Rabe'a, (tribal Sunni Arab, Kurd), Rabia town has the Port of Entry with Syria and is the significant transit point for foreign fighters and smuggled goods;

-- Tal Afar subdistrict of Zumar (predominately Sunni Arab), under Kurdish pressure because of historical Kurdish ties and because it would provide a bridge from Sinjar in the west to the KRG in the east.

¶14. (S/NF) The political leadership of all four minority communities expressed strong skepticism of Kurdish intentions at the beginning of the year and expressed these concerns to the PRT and MND-N. However, earlier in the same day of the bombings, the Yezidi emir made a 180-degree turn, insisting the Yezidis were Kurds and that the KRG was necessary for their protection (reftel). During Deputy Prime Minister Salih's visit to Qahtaniya on August 16, some Yezidi villagers said they did not like the extremely heavy Kurdish security presence and some placed blame on the Kurds for the terror attack because they felt targeted by their association with the Kurds. Similarly, the provincial leadership of the Assyrian Democratic Movement, though strongly opposed to Article 140, has predicted to the PRT and MND-N that Christians will resign themselves to KRG rule as the only path to security.

Comment

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¶15. (S/NF) The August 14 attacks demonstrated that the current security measures and the political climate make soft targets increasingly desirable. AQI can burnish Arab nationalist credentials while demonstrating that KRG-levels normalcy have not fully taken root the parts of Ninewa with heavy Kurdish influence. The attacks may make minority communities across the province more willing to accept or even demand Peshmerga and Assiyash presence in their

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communities. Kurdish expansion, by whatever methods, is present in nearly all political discussions in Ninewa. This has served as propaganda fodder for terrorist groups like AQI and ISI in soliciting support by integrating Sunni Arab nationalism and the fear of the Kurds with their own radicalized Islamic agenda. In Ninewa, the "Green Line" is a political and security minefield, and a careful navigation will be required.

